

# Eline Pedersen

## Doctor of Chiropractic

“What better time to provide release and healing to a human being than in that miraculous moment of birth?”

### Who are YOU?

I am a farm girl who grew up in Norway. We lived in nature and with nature, it was a very healthy and sustainable way to live. My parents were wonderful, I grew up knowing nothing but love and a friendly environment, my parents protected me from difficult things, until I reached an age where I was able to understand and also learn how to help solve problems in the world. I was very inspired by my mother. In between running around her herb garden mixing treatments for healing the animals on the farm, she worked for Amnesty International. I grew up believing in goodness and in myself, because people believed in me. So, this is what I'm now here to do: believe in others and show them the way to believe in themselves.

I became a Doctor of Chiropractic in 2004 because of my love for natural ways of healing and I am the owner of Aberdeen Chiropractic clinic in Scotland and First Breath Chiropractic clinics in Larnaca and Nicosia, Cyprus.

My work is extremely fulfilling and I passionately wish to share that knowledge. I have been honoured to be given a number of awards, of particular note, as the initiator and founder of Birth Forward, a Cypriot non-profit organisation and also an “Honoris Cause Doctorate of Humanity” specialising in Leadership (AUGP).

### What is the single best piece of business advice that helped shape who you are now?

Be honest!

### What do you think is the single most significant barrier to female leadership?

I believe this is culturally dependent. I'm talking about the culture in a country, or the culture in a business, or the culture in a micro or macro environment. In order for female leadership to become more accepted we need to change the culture, and that has to happen from within.

We need to foster and empower women coming into the business world. Women

who are already empowered have a massive responsibility in this process. By sharing our own experiences and knowledge, our love and our passion, our “feminine capital” – in accordance with the message of our dear Viola Edward of Feminine Capital ([www.violaedward.com](http://www.violaedward.com)) – we need to bring out the best female strengths, without being abusive or aggressive in our ways. I believe there's a beautiful way to provide leadership as a woman without competing with the male style of leadership; there's a balance between the two, a beautiful dance, and I believe in the current business environment we have lost this balance by overusing one style only and the feminine aspect becoming too masculinized.

### How do you take care of your body, mind and soul?

Well I'm a chiropractor and our philosophy *is* to look after mind, body and soul. Getting regular treatment from my fellow chiropractors makes me adaptable and ready for everything in life. I live an extremely busy life, travelling a lot, and am involved in lots of projects but I still feel I can manage. I always say that I'm “busy by choice.” It might sound funny, but I love being busy! I love engaging in my passion; I love my clients, all the pregnant mums and new babies that I see, and I have to make very conscious choices to have a sustainable life. Several things are a “must” to manage this and they cannot be compromised. After I drop off my kids at school I make time for stand up paddle boarding, a swim or pilates. I breathe in the beauty of the Mediterranean Sea.

My chiropractic adjustments, sleep, healthy living, eating well and super foods, water and exercise are a high priority.

### If you were in the jungle what animal would you be?

A lioness: protecting her cubs and future generations with her life.

### How do you manage your time between Cyprus and Scotland?

This actually works out really well for us. I spend three weeks in Cyprus, one week in Scotland every month. Thankfully, my amazing

husband, Costas, is my rock and my soul mate and a brilliant father to our two sons. The week I am away is an intense working time. I focus, plan, manage and create, as well as see clients in Scotland. When I'm in Cyprus, my absolute focus is the kids. We play and create together as much as we can. Sometimes my husband goes to Scotland instead, and this gives him the opportunity to plan, go to seminars, connect to our staff associates in Aberdeen, and have some time for himself. At times one of us has to stay in Scotland and we might only get a weekend together every month. Having two small children it can be hard, but I think we manage really well. It's also good, as we learn a lot about ourselves and each other! We've been together 18 years and have gotten so close, with two very different cultures and two very different personalities. We've grown together, both as business partners and in our personal relationship. We've created habits and adjusted our ways and cultures to fit each other's perspectives. I believe one of the core values we share is a commitment to support each other. We want this so much there could be a danger to forget what we want as individuals. By being apart we get some distance and the chance to take care of our individual self. So, we create a space where we remember who we are at all times. This is something we've developed from our experiences and it is very healthy.

### What made you specialise in birth trauma, paediatric care and pregnant women in the field of chiropractic medicine?

I think it's beautiful to see the changes a woman goes through during her pregnancy and as she becomes a mother. I love to be a part of that. I'm very concerned when natural processes during this time of development for mother and baby cannot happen, for one reason or another. The nature of birth can differ from person to person, from one birth to another. But the important thing is for mothers and couples to have all the information available to them to make empowered choices for the birth – whatever the nature of that birth might be. It



is important that they are informed, listened to, and part of the decision making during this beautiful time. I'm concerned for babies born with trauma, especially when they are unable to breastfeed and connect with their mother and father during the first moments of life. When I see trauma and tension in a newborn unfolding in my hands...when I see the child release that trauma, it's as if they are taking their very first free breath, and then they relax... it's amazing to watch, it's like magic every single time to see them take that breath.

### What inspires you in your work?

I absolutely love my work. I am so passionate about educating mothers and fathers during the process of becoming a family. We know from the Primal Health Research Database of Dr. Michel Odent ([www.primalhealthresearch.com](http://www.primalhealthresearch.com)) that the moment of birth is a most critical time for our future mental and physical wellbeing. So what better time to provide release and healing to a human being than in that miraculous moment of birth? There are so many great chiropractors around the world providing care for mums and babies and I am truly grateful for what I have learned from my mentors, like Claudia Anrig ([www.drclaudiaanrig.com](http://www.drclaudiaanrig.com)), the author of the greatest paediatric chiropractic textbook written. Another inspiring leader is Dr. Jeanne Ohm ([www.icpa4kids.com](http://www.icpa4kids.com)) founder of The Pathways Magazine ([www.pathwaystofamilywellness.org](http://www.pathwaystofamilywellness.org)) which is an amazing resource for parents and parents-to-be. Jeanne is a mother of six as well as running the International Chiropractic Paediatric Association. I also really admire Heidi Haavik ([www.heidihaavik.com](http://www.heidihaavik.com)), a Norwegian chiropractor and researcher who is doing ground-breaking research on the profound effects of chiropractic adjustment, showing how we become more adaptable and capable human beings with every adjustment received, as we optimise the nervous system functions. If you go to her website, you can see some awesome videos on the positive benefits of chiropractic care beyond pain. I could mention so many more! I'm surrounded by leaders and enthusiastic, committed and loving human

beings – how can I not be inspired to also contribute and share this beautiful work?

### Does your work translate into benefits for your own personal and family life?

Chiropractic is a lifestyle for us and filters onto every aspect of our life. We always strive to make educated and conscious choices for ourselves and our children, our own experiences likewise influence the direction of work.

I gave birth to my first son, Savvas, in the hospital. A beautiful midwife led the birth which took many hours and a lot of patience, breathing and deep connectedness with my husband, we gave birth together. Savvas is now 8 years-old and so patient with a beautiful and sensitive soul.

My second son, Matheos, was born at home and I delivered him myself, with my humble midwives protecting and holding the space for me to be free to do whatever I felt I needed. It was the most spiritual moment in my life. He and I gave birth together, he directed the movements of the “dance” through the contractions like the conductor of an orchestra. He was in charge of every breath; I listened and obeyed. No one interfered with our symphony. Now, you may ask me, how is he today, at the age of 5? He has not changed! He is fearless! He owns his body and his own soul with such confidence.

I believe my children's births are connected to how they are, as beings. It is my job to not break down who they are with limiting beliefs. If you think about it, isn't it curious that mothers are often told what to do, instead of being asked *what do you need* during your birth? And I think we need to challenge this even further, we should be asking what does your baby need? Think about how that changes our conversation around birth! Dr. Michel Odent speaks about how we need to change the language around birth. His speaks of the need to protect rather than “support” the birthing woman. The word



“support” implies that she needs somebody else around to be able to manage. Whereas if you use the word protect, it changes the conversation completely because a woman who is fully protected, can be aware, present and engaged, and she knows what she and her baby need during that birth.

### What was the inspiration for Birth Forward?

Birth Forward is a non-profit NGO in Cyprus ([www.birthforward.com](http://www.birthforward.com)). I was inspired to start Birth Forward, through my work as a chiropractor, and seeing the situation in Cyprus through the experiences of my own children's births. In Cyprus we have very high rates of intervention, low rates of breastfeeding, and very high rates of Caesarian section. Almost two thirds of babies are born through surgery instead of naturally. Clearly, sometimes medical intervention is needed but the aim should be the best possible experience for mothers and fathers even in these circumstances, making sure their wishes and needs are met, and that they are fully informed and part of the decision-making. When I took the initiative to create Birth Forward in 2013 I brought together professionals: midwives, colleagues, obstetricians, general physicians, psychologists, psychotherapists and – most importantly – mothers who had had many different birthing experiences. My aim was to bridge the gap between professionals and parents, and to bridge the scope of the subject itself, by addressing the issue from preconception through to childhood. At the same time, I wanted to bridge the divide between the two communities of the beautiful island of Cyprus (divided politically since 1974), by bringing together people from across the whole island to focus on what we can do to change the situation. The idea is to do this in a compassionate way and in a multidisciplinary way, bringing everybody together to make a positive change.

### Can you tell us more about the work of Birth Forward?

It's been an amazing journey! We work together with other professional bodies,

with the Cypriot Ministry of Health, with the department of Midwifery and Nursing at the Cyprus University of Technology, and with organisations in the UK, Germany and Greece. At the moment our big focus is introducing a web-based app which informs parents from the first day of pregnancy until the baby is six months old. This is a fantastic product called Baby Buddy Forward, based on Baby Buddy in the UK. The web app will be adjusted to the Cypriot culture and translated into Greek, Turkish, Arabic and Russian. It is an EU funded project and is the biggest project we have had so far. Meanwhile, we work for advocacy and the Ministry of Health has promised a strategy for improving birthing in Cyprus, so this is already in motion based on our work. We provide regular support groups for mothers to revisit and discuss their birthing experiences, IVF and loss of baby support groups. We also provide educational materials, informing the public of European evidence-based guidelines through our Scientific Advisory Board. I believe it is extremely important as leader of any organisation to make sure that all the information that's going out is fully in line with the latest evidence and fully in line with the human rights aspects of healthcare. In just three years the organisation has been recognized on a national level and is the leading organisation in Cyprus on this subject, representing both parents and professionals. Birth Forward operates with up to six paid staff depending on the project we work on and about 60 volunteers. I'm extremely proud to have been elected President of such an amazing organisation.

### What is next for you and for Birth Forward?

In the immediate future what's on the agenda for Birth Forward is to follow up with the Ministry of Health's strategy for birth in Cyprus. We're also working on bringing together mothers, fathers and children from the two sides of this politically split island by having a Birth Forward presence in the north of Cyprus. We've arranged family gatherings and breastfeeding events, in collaboration with professionals from both sides, and already see more collaboration happening across the two

communities. Our monthly meetings are always held in the “Green” buffer zone at the Home for Cooperation ([www.home4cooperation.info](http://www.home4cooperation.info)). This is a Norwegian funded project to support collaborative initiatives, and I love the fact that we can use this building to hold our AGM, monthly meetings and other events.

Beyond this, I am working on implementing a research project with specialists from around Europe and the world, on a concept where we want to investigate the potential benefits of protecting the first breath of life. I see society and the world suffering, we have more sickness and more mental health issues as time goes on, and in light of research supporting the idea that the most critical time period for our mental and physical wellbeing, may very well be the moment of birth, my question is: if we protect the first breath can we save our society? There are so many things that have to fall into place and it requires multidisciplinary collaboration, which respects both mothers and babies, physical bodies and feelings. What if we protect our future generations' first breath? If every child could take its first breath fearless, relaxed and open, would this child grow up healthier, more confident and more resilient? It's a bold question and there has been a lot of interest. I hope we might see not just a documentary but also the seeds for many new collaborations, research and guidelines to improve birthing culture around the world. The first step is to bring together a crowd of profoundly different professionals to discuss the concept. Apart from the obvious health professionals involved with birth, chiropractors, and osteopaths, we are inviting top researchers from a diversity of fields. The first event will be arranged in collaboration with the Laszlo Institute of the New Paradigm <http://www.laszloinstitute.com/> in Italy this year and I'm really excited see what will come of this.